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Full Length Paper

Change in the Education System in England and Wales in the last 70 years (Part 1: 1944 – 1949)

David Montague Rogerson, MA (Oxon), Ph.D. Croft House, 20, Church Street, Addingham, Nr. Ilkley, LS29 0QT, England
drogerson@blueyonder.co.uk +441943830377

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Change in the Education System in England and Wales in the last 70 years (Part 1: 1944 – 1949) **examines in detail the development of the national education system and its effects on regional localities from the 1944 Education Act to the present time. The paper's approach is both through an analysis of processes that have fuelled the changes in that time as well as demonstrating experientially that although the 1944 Education Act was a revolutionary attempt to create a new educational settlement in post-war Britain it did not resolve all the problems. It did, however, become the enabling legislation for the development of the national system of education in England and Wales after the Second World War. The writer concludes that subsequent developments have been in accord with the Act or have been enabled by the add-on legislation of successive governments and that the educational themes, which developed later, have their origin in the unresolved problems and the mandatory/permissive mix of the 1944 Act; and in reactions to it.**

Keywords: 1944 Education Act; National Education System; Centralisation; Decentralisation

INTRODUCTION

An education system is difficult to analyse, to summarise, and, to control, if only because it consists of a large number of individual units, each of which is different from all the others. The differences may be small but they may, nonetheless, be significant. Learning is an individual experience that takes place, formally, in a social circumstance. The purpose of this series of articles is to provide a framework for understanding what has happened to the system, that is the formal provision, in England and Wales, as a whole, in the last sixty or so years.

It seems unlikely that any system of education in a democratic society can be either completely decentralised or completely centralised. Each national system is a mixture of permissive and mandatory legislation and the relationship between the two influences the shape and balance of the system. Mandatory legislation, enacted by a superior political body, provides a firm baseline from which courses of action are derived logically. There is little room for discussion and, at local level; the number of decisions, individuals and reference groups and the range of decisions are likely to be limited. Permissive legislation, on the other hand, allows localities and individual units much greater rights of interpretation and initiation. The number of decision-makers, individuals and reference groups and the range of decisions are all likely to be increased. The characteristics typically produced by mandatory legislation are those of a centralised system. Equally, the characteristics typically produced by permissive legislation are those of a decentralised system. The overwhelming tendency in the

development of the education service in England and Wales over the last sixty years has been a progressively strong movement towards centralisation.

The PRECURSORS of the ACT

In the four years before the Second World War there was debate about educational reform at national level (Gosden, 1976). The Hadow Report was an important part of the debate. Hadow had attempted to produce a rational structure for secondary education for all using notions of child-centredness, general education and continuous education: i.e. primary education leading on to secondary education (Hadow, 1935). The system was to be bi-partite with central and elementary schools becoming modern schools on an equal footing with grammar schools. Little happened as a result of Hadow and, in Gosden's views (Gosden, 1983), the anticipated reorganisation was impeded by a lack of political will as much as by financial constraints.

The Spens Report (Spens, 1938) recommended the setting up of Technical High Schools, in addition to grammar and modern schools, concentrating on science and its application in the upper years.

Attempts at reform before 1939 concentrated on preparations for the raising of the school leaving age to fifteen; the development of senior school systems; and, possible changes in the secondary school curriculum following the Spens Report. The slow progress of reform was stopped by the onset of war, but public criticism of the Board of Education did not cease and in 1939 and 1940 the press commented that it failed to provide direction and planning (Gosden, 1983, op cit).

The response within the Board was the formation of the Committee of Senior Officials on Post-War Reconstruction in early November 1940. This committee was convened as a group for informal discussion and consisted of Principal Assistant Secretaries and Inspectors. It operated informally by considering memoranda prepared by the heads of the different branches of the Board. The memoranda, following discussion, modification and sometimes extensive editing, appeared as chapters in the Green Book (Education after the War, 1941). This book was never published, nor widely circulated, but it examined existing provision and set the agenda for post-war educational reform and the 1944 Act. It seems likely that confidentiality was important in establishing the agenda, though it did create some difficulties.

Negotiation was hampered by confidentiality as some significant parties; HMI for instance, did not have access to the Green Book. Nevertheless, R. A. B. Butler managed, after his appointment as President of the Board in 1941, to negotiate successfully with the interest groups and the government to produce an agreed set of documents, which became the White Paper leading to the 1944 Act. Negotiations with the churches were particularly time-consuming, delicate and important (Gosden, 1976, op cit).

Some of the problems examined in the memoranda reappear throughout the rest of the century. Such issues were: the future school leaving age; the ages at which children should move from one school to another; the form of secondary education including the functions and comparative esteem of secondary schools (re-named senior schools), grammar schools, and

technical/commercial schools; the organisation of LEAs and particularly the political problems of the elimination of Part 3 authorities and the problems associated with the dual system of governing bodies (LEA provided and voluntary schools).

There was a determination to change the balance within the partnership and throughout the discussions there was a strong sense of the need for the Board to lead in the process of reconstruction rather than follow (Gosden, 1976, op cit). Some members of the committees were traditionalists and were anxious to preserve what they believed to be essentially sound. Others saw a need for, and an opportunity for, the promotion of radical change.

W. Cleary, head of the Elementary Branch, advocated the common school as the only long-term solution to secondary education for all. He argued that the war was emphasising the unity of the nation and that there was a need to break down social and economic barriers. He saw the common school as a means of establishing equality of opportunity and parity of esteem for schools. G. G. Williams, head of the Secondary Branch, was strongly opposed to this view. He was very much in favour of the retention of the grammar schools because of their proven worth and argued that parity of esteem should not be acquired at their expense. The issue was settled by the Permanent Secretary, M. G. Holmes, who decided that there should be separate schools following a break at age eleven because the need to use existing buildings and staffs made the tripartite system more practicable in the immediate post-war period. The issue of the difference of opinion was not really settled but postponed because of practical and financial considerations and the tripartite view tended to dominate. It is equally true to note that there was nothing in the wording of the Act that constituted a mandatory premise leading inevitably to the development of a tripartite system. The Norwood Report (Norwood, 1943), dealing mainly with the question of public examinations gave the traditionalists on the Board what they wanted. It asserted three types of mind coinciding with the three types of institutions envisaged by Spens but failed to justify the opinion with empirical research (Gosden, 1976, op cit). However, the essential decisions about the organisation and scope of secondary education after the War rested on economic factors, especially the availability of buildings and staffs.

Similar differences and constraints nationwide helped to produce different responses to the Act in different parts of the country. There were some comprehensive experiments in response to particular local circumstances, but the majority response to the 1944 Act was the establishment of a tripartite system foreshadowed in the pre-war reports. The system was based on a process of selection at the end of primary education, commonly based on an IQ test and two attainment tests (English and Maths). This system was subject to early and consistent modification because of worries about its efficiency and fairness.

The Act did produce a significant change to the language of education by recognising three successive stages of primary, secondary and further education. However, after establishing that the secondary stage would start at the age of eleven plus and that children should be educated according to their aptitude and ability there was no detail about preferred organisational structures or pedagogical practices (Tyrrel, 1964).

There was also no statement about the links between the different stages, nor the place of each in developing a system responsive either to individual need or national requirement. The lack of mandatory legislation and specific instructions typical of the decentralised system

allowed the possibility of different responses and the development of different sub-systems within the national system. Tripartite, bipartite and comprehensive schemes were all permissible providing that they could be justified on the grounds that they reflected local requirements.

The Negotiating Process and Pressure for Change

In the context of the 1944 Act, there was no precise definition as to how the dignity of citizenship was to be achieved and there was a constant worry in the tripartite system that the system of selection at eleven plus was inadequate. The rise of the comprehensive ideology was both a practical reflection of local needs and an attempt to resolve the problem of education for all. In fact, the varied character of the English and Welsh system at this time is related to three factors. First, the decentralisation of systems and knowledge; secondly, the consistent importance which was placed on local influences; and, thirdly, the lack of an adequate means of achieving and prioritising aims. Policy-makers in education have always lacked an adequate empirical basis for their judgements relying heavily on experience and custom and practice. The implications for the service are considerable if only because uncertainties, local differences and the importance of local influences have produced the right to negotiate. The tradition was established that schemes (systems, knowledge and ideology) for national approval should be submitted following negotiation with different reference groups such as LEA personnel, councillors, teachers, parents, churches and community bodies. Negotiation implies that aspects of a proposal may be changed in response to the wishes of those being consulted and over the years all those involved in education have developed competences in expressing and getting at least some of their own way. Any proposal in education has seemed to be fair game for both comment and possible modification.

The importance of pressure and reference groups

The importance of negotiations and consultation in shaping the education service is considerable and its form may depend largely on the comparative strengths of interest and reference groups. These, at first sight, appear to be very diverse, but they can be catalogued according to their origin and allegiances into three possible categories.

Some groups are associated because they are politically directed. Examples of this category would be central government with its financial, legal and administrative controls, the DES (Department for Education and Science) as it was in 1944, and also LEAs. Other groups form a distinct category because they arise directly from the profession and include officers, advisers, teachers and lecturers in different types of associations. A third category of groups arises from external agencies such as community groups, industry, parents and governing bodies. Each group pulls at the education system and seeks to influence the course of both the management of day-to-day policy and the development of the system itself.

Thus, changes occur within the decentralised system as a result of different influences and unresolved problems. Some problems, such as the efficiency of selection at eleven-plus, are inherent in the system. Some are ideological and have their origin in notions about the place of education in the formation and sustenance of a modern democracy. Different attitudes to equality of opportunity and to minority rights, for instance, find expression in different ideas

about the ways in which educational institutions should be run. Some problems are professional and arise from the internal organisation of the service and from the esteem with which the public service is regarded.

Equally, changes occur in the system because individuals desire to make a mark or to use the service to promote a particular pointy of view. The permissiveness of the system and hence the importance which is given to the interpretation by individual schools and their teachers increases the tendency to change and produces very varied results.

The importance of negotiations, partial advice (both in the sense of incompleteness and special pleading on behalf of a particular interest group) and an inadequate empirical base has led to a pattern consisting of some unintended consequences. The policy-makers in education spend much of their time watching their policies being implemented in ways that distort their original intentions (Shipman, 1984).

Points of Influence

Negotiations produce modifications at two points in the system: at an initial stage or following publication of proposals or legislation. First, ideas, systems and policies are rarely conceived in isolation. They may be generated by the spread of practices into many units within the system. Developments in localities are, thus, very important. Secondly, after the publication of a proposal, reference groups often seek to exert influence to make the proposal more acceptable to their views and interests. The twin processes of modification by initiation and modification by reaction ensure that each sub-section of the education service has its own system of sub-politics.

Political Negotiations

Political negotiations have become increasingly important in the development of the education service during the last sixty years. Indeed, political inputs have been a necessary part of the service ever since the development of the education of the population as an aspect of the state. Who has the power of decision is a constant question throughout the history of the service and quite often the answer may not be immediately obvious and perhaps subject to negotiation. The action and reaction by and within the polity are an essential part of any account of the development of the service.

Professional Negotiations

Within education, professionals – officers, advisers, principals, lecturers, heads and teachers – are involved in a large number of negotiations at every level of the service. Some are undertaken by professional organisations formally and informally, but many are individual and associated with minor professional and friendship groups. Negotiation is a principal source of excitement and satisfaction for many. Formal negotiations often occur in meetings, which are certainly affected by friendships and other informal contacts. The influence is often unacknowledged but may be very powerful. In the uncertain world of education, professionals find certainty by cross-referencing between similar institutions and by reference to existing custom and practice. This may tend to make attitudes within the profession self-perpetuating

and critical analysis difficult.

External Agency Negotiations

The third set of negotiations, those with external agencies are often very diverse. Negotiations with governing bodies, parents' bodies and other community representatives are very important to schools and figure largely in the process of school management. Other negotiations with welfare officers, bus companies, school meals, social services and social workers, caretakers and cleaners, users of the premises within the community, charity workers, area health officers and others all involve educational institutions in complex and sometimes highly personal negotiations. Negotiations with external agencies take place at all levels within the education system. All three types of group have opportunities to be involved in the twin processes of modification by initiation and modification by reaction by which the decentralised system changes. They provide the power and the motives behind the changes.

If the analysis is accurate, it follows that the education system is likely to be in a process of constant change with little chance of any certainty of process or outcome. This is particularly true when the main driver of the change is the central polity in Westminster, which may have long-term concerns and ambitions, but has a relatively short term of office. Continuity often depends on shared philosophies and traditions and a willingness to accept what has gone before. This is rare.

1944 EDUCATION ACT

The Act was passed at a time of relative consensus in parliament about educational policy. While the Bill was passing through parliament there were recurrent calls for bi-partisan unity partly because of a desire to avoid the dissensions both local and national which followed the 1902 Education Act (Fenwick, 1976) but also because of a desire to meet the increased expectations for a post-war society. There was an ideological strand to the consensus clearly expressed in the writings of Tawney and Marshall. Equality of opportunity was not to be seen simply in terms of an economic hierarchy. It had also to be seen as part of a concept of citizenship. This involved the right to upward economic and social mobility for able people from the lower classes and the citizen's right of access to cultural fulfilment (Marshall, 1950; and Tawney, 1952).

The passage of the Bill through parliament and its ready acceptance by all political parties was an important product of the consensus.

The Position of the Minister

The reorganisation of statutory rights between central and local government was important. The Ministry was established with a Minister at its head with a direct responsibility "to promote the education of the people of England and Wales and under whose control and direction the local authorities were to carry out the national policy for providing a varied and comprehensive education system in every area" (1944 Education Act, Part 1). Thus, the government of education was reorganised and unified under the umbrella of state control in pursuit of the development of a coherent system. The title of Minister was not merely a symbolic upgrading

since it conferred a general responsibility very different from that of the President of the Board of Education before 1944 (Dent, 1969). Many subsequent actions by Ministers used the centralising possibility of their role, but the initial interpretations by Ministers were very different and decentralisation was reinforced by their actions.

Decentralisation was highlighted by the government demand that each LEA (Local Education Authority) should produce a plan detailing precise measures to implement the measures enshrined in the Act. The shift in power in 1944 and the different interpretations of roles and distribution of power, which have occurred in the years since the Act clearly demonstrated the difficulty of the notion of partnership between central and local government. Partnership is an imprecise idea and subject to interpretation. It is, however, at the heart of the decentralised system and assumes that local needs are better met by widespread involvement because implementation is more effective; and, that in any other system individual enterprise is dulled by imposed uniformity.

The processing of the responses to the 1944 Act with its attendant negotiations ensured that the position of the Minister at the heart of the new central authority did not go unchallenged and local authorities were the challenging and major negotiation mechanism. It also ensured that the effects of the legislation were different in separate geographical localities. There was, for instance, a majority tripartite response, but with great disparity in the provision of grammar school places. According to Weeks the percentage of places available varied from 8 percent to 40 percent (Weeks, 1986) and there was even considerable difference in grammar school provision within some LEAs.

Variations in the processes used to select children at eleven-plus also produced significant local and regional variations. Systems were changed at a very early stage during the development of the tripartite system and this reflected the hesitant ideology inherent in the 1944 Act. In the West Riding County Council, for instance, different systems were allowed in different parts of the LEA and even when the Thorne scheme was adopted as its preferred scheme it was not imposed on reluctant localities.

Governing Bodies

The sections of the 1944 Act that established the remit of governing bodies were extremely important to the development of education throughout the rest of the century, because there are significant differences in the governance of voluntary and maintained schools. This is apparent, for instance, in the proportion of governors appointed by the governing body itself.

Section 18 of the Act stated that if a school is aided, two-thirds of the managers shall be foundation managers (that is appointed by the voluntary body owning the school) and if the school is controlled, one third of the managers shall be foundation managers. In any discussion about the running of the school, its direction and its future this provision provided an interest group with a great deal of potential power.

The governing bodies of voluntary schools have different financial obligations and different relationships with LEAs. The governors of a controlled school do not have any responsibility for the expenditure, capital or current, of the school. Finance is the responsibility of the LEA.

In the case of aided schools, however, the governors own the property and were (immediately post the 1944 Act) responsible for one half the capital expenditure on alterations required by the LEA to keep the premises up to standard (this figure has varied over the years and the amount funded by the taxpayer rose to 75% in 1959; to 80% in 1967; to 85% in 1974; and to 90% in 2001) and for expenditure on repairs to the exterior of the building. The LEA was, and is, responsible for all running costs, including the salaries of teachers. There were also special conditions relating to the discontinuance of voluntary schools. Two years notice must be given of a proposed discontinuance and, except by a special dispensation from the Minister; it may not be discontinued at all if the local authority has incurred expenditure on the establishment. In these sections of the Act, the notion of partnership was used to disguise difficulties in producing consensus and to justify the production of different systems based upon different responsibilities, privileges and relationships. It seems to have been a product of the perceived necessity to get the legislation through the commons with a minimum of disruption and it has been considered less radical than many hoped it would be because it failed to resolve two problems: the church schools (i.e. the dual system of governing bodies) and private education.

The dual system of governing bodies caused a good deal of controversy in the West Riding of Yorkshire when a response had to be made by the Authority to the White Paper. It informed the Board that it wished “to express their keen disappointment that instead of ending the dual system, the White Paper not only perpetuates but strengthens its position (Gosden and Sharp, 1978). Later, in preparing the West Riding Plan, the LEA held to its view that all schools in single school areas should be LEA schools. This aroused considerable opposition from the voluntary school interest and no less than 140 of the 166 objections to the West Riding Development Plan concerned proposals to replace existing voluntary schools by county provision. In ninety-nine of the instances judgement went against the LEA.

There were other provisions in the Act that need to be described briefly. The Act covered many aspects of the welfare of children particularly medical inspection. The concern for the welfare of children was also expressed in the 1948 Children Act, which gave the local authority the right to take children into care. The Act also established two Central Advisory Councils, one for England and one for Wales. This provided opportunities to try to answer some of the unresolved professional and ideological questions. The Councils were, however, little involved in developments immediately post the Act. They were certainly not decisive at that stage.

TEACHERS

In view of the decisions being taken by all LEAs all interested parties had to establish their own point of view. Teachers generally, but most particularly heads, were noticeably more cautious at the end than at the beginning of the 1940s. Initially, some were in favour of experiments but they became increasingly ambivalent about them (Fenwick, 1976 op cit).

Throughout the 1940s parliamentary attitudes reflected confidence in the Act and there was some determination not to let education become a matter for party politics. Miss Wilkinson and George Tomlinson, who succeeded her as Minister, were, like many other Labour MPs, loyal to the system, which had helped to produce them before the war and were not anxious to destroy the grammar schools. Their view of partnership was that comprehensive schools might

be established under their Ministry but the initiatives had to come from the LEAs. This view was subject to considerable opposition but from a few people. The most prominent opponent was W. G. Cove (a NATIONAL UNION of TEACHERS {NUT} sponsored MP). The promise of this small group was not to let the issue of comprehensive schools die and their view was that the government must take the lead (Fenwick, 1976 op cit). The attitude of Ministers following the passing of the 1944 Act was important in reinforcing the tendency towards decentralisation. They did not seek to impose a single system nor a single ideology on the service but listened to local voices. The position of the Minister as a centralising and unifying force was not obvious at this time.

It might be interesting to consider how the developments around the 1944 Act actually influenced my own education. I was born on November 3rd 1936 in Grimethorpe, a mining village, near Barnsley in the West Riding. I went to the infant's school, at Grimethorpe, when I was three years old. This was fortunate for us because the onset of the war the calling up of many men who were employed in the offices of the Carlton Main Coal Company, created opportunities for experienced secretaries like my mother. She obtained a job just above where we lived, Deputy Row, and her wage made a considerable difference to what we could do as a family.

I remember some things about the school. It was a straightforward, conventional education with an emphasis on discipline and learning the basics. I was probably a little slow at learning to write satisfactory letters because I am left-handed but learning to read was relatively simple. We did vigorous physical education in the yard and, initially, had a sleep in the afternoon. We also had music sessions, based largely on percussion instruments. I was terrified of getting the timing wrong. The school was mixed but, when we moved on at 7 years old, the boys and the girls were separated into two single-sex elementary schools. All three schools were concentrated in an area of land at the top of the High Street.

The 1944 Act had no immediate impact on the schools. The boys' elementary school was a forward-looking institution with George Stewardson as its Headmaster. He was about the same age as my parents and lived in the Headmaster's house in the White City, some distance from the schools. His predecessor, Mr. William Bretton, had been at the school for many years and was very highly respected. I do not remember ever meeting him. Mr. Stewardson was, like many other Heads in the West Riding, very keen on music and encouraged the formation of a large school choir and a competent brass band. Many of the teachers had been at the school for many years and there was a strong sense of continuity. Perhaps the most influential teacher in my life was Mrs. Freda Reed who later became the Deputy Head of the school. She was the choir mistress at the Methodist Chapel and her husband worked as an electrician at the pit alongside my father. My father had a magnificent voice and was a welcome addition to the choir and my mother was a good singer as well as a very good secretary. Freda and Frank Reed were our friends. They had a son, Malcolm, who was a little older than I, and I benefited from the many things of his that were passed on to me, including a lot of books. I developed well at the school and had a great interest in learning and in music. I established a reputation for being quite clever and for most of the final year I was moved up into the next age group. There was one aspect of the West Riding that inadvertently had a great effect on me. The County had a system of supply teachers who could be called upon to ease staffing difficulties in the schools. One of these teachers was sent to Grimethorpe

and he took a great interest in all the pupils. In my case, he was very insistent that I should set my sights on going to university. On the day he left, I walked with him to Shafton Halt where he caught the train to Wakefield and the last thing he said was that I should be sure to go to university. Probably, he had no idea how great was his influence on me.

As the time approached for me to take the eleven plus examination there seemed to be two possibilities, if I passed, Barnsley Holgate Grammar School or Hemsworth Grammar School. My auntie had been to Hemsworth and was the first of our family to go the grammar school. Freda Reed knew that there were not many places at Barnsley Holgate and that they took Barnsley children first, only giving places to the mining district children if they had spare places. In the event, there were no places given in my year. She advised my mother and father that I should take the entrance examination at Wakefield Queen Elizabeth Grammar School as insurance. I took both examinations and passed both and when the West Riding wrote that I was offered a place at Hemsworth only, it was decided that I should go to Wakefield even though it meant that my parents would have to make a financial contribution to my education. My mother's wage was very helpful in this situation. Freda was probably very influential in this decision.

Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Wakefield, was a direct grant school. It received money straight from the government and was not beholden to the West Riding County Council. It was an ancient foundation and was responsible for its own governance. Wakefield Borough sent some of its most able grammar school pupils to it and the West Riding had a limited number of places. There were some fee-paying pupils and, from areas to the west and north of Barnsley, some scholarships (Beaumont scholarships) were available because of an endowment. As a consequence, the school took its intake from able boys from a large geographical area stretching from the north and west of Barnsley almost to Leeds. In many ways, I was very fortunate to go to this school.

My best friend from Grimethorpe, Cyril Holliday, was not as lucky as I. He did not pass the eleven plus examination even though he was a very intelligent young man. He took another examination at the age of 13 and went to the Technical College at Barnsley under an arrangement between the West Riding and Barnsley Borough Council. This seems to have been a product of the 1944 Act and the demand by the Ministry that the amount of Technical Education should be increased during the negotiations about the West Riding Development Plan. It was cheaper for the West Riding to buy technical places rather than to build its own.

Cyril made good use of his opportunity and went on to become a technical teacher in a comprehensive school. He, according to one of his former pupils, was well respected and an excellent teacher. I am not surprised. In his case, the Act along with the Riding's determination to compensate for the uncertainties of the selection process, made a very big difference. The boys' elementary school at Grimethorpe continued relatively unchanged for many years and coped with the raising of the school leaving age and it was, along with the girls' school, re-designated as a secondary modern school. In the late 1950s, both schools were closed and moved to a new building on land between Grimethorpe and Brierley to become Willowgarth School. It later became a comprehensive school when the Hemsworth area was reorganised.

The West Riding

The West Riding had welcomed the 1944 Act, but when Alec Clegg was appointed Chief Officer (1945), he found that the Authority was in dispute with the Ministry (Gosden and Sharp, 1978 op cit). The source of the disagreement was the procedure for selection at eleven plus and writing to A. E. Parsons at the Ministry he made two points. First, he asserted that education was bound by material conditions (a problem which was much associated with the necessity to use existing buildings), which had not been altered at all by the Act. Secondly, he wanted to know from whom the Authority could learn to allocate children according to ability and aptitude at the age of eleven. Clegg, by this means, highlighted an area of imprecision within the Act, which was to be a constant source of criticism of the operation of the selective system.

He also astutely sought help from academics. Sir Fred Clarke (NFER) Dr. Charlotte Fleming (London Institute of Education) and Professor G. Thomson (Moray House) were unanimous in corroborating the view that it was not possible to detect special aptitudes in children of 11 and then to allocate them to secondary schools appropriately. When Clegg discussed the Authority's provision at the Policy Sub-Committee in July 1946 he argued that the Authority should be wary of a rigid tripartite division and recommended experiments with all types of provision. He further argued that where possible multilateral schools should be set up, but he was not against segregation according to intellectual ability within them. Clegg's statement aroused no political controversy. The attitude of County was similar to that of central government. Local areas suggested schemes to the County Authority through their Divisional Executives.

Where the issue of comprehensive reorganisation was taken up by political parties and local feelings ignored, dissension was almost bound to arise. A pattern of opposition developed quite early when in Middlesex a well-organised group of grammar school old pupils' associations, teachers and parents focussed on the issue of a proposed change in the status of Ashford Grammar School. The grammar school was retained as a result of "local opposition to its abolition; the loss of control of the County Council by Labour in 1949; opposition to the Middlesex scheme from the Labour government" (Fenwick, 1976 op cit).

There was a real danger that political polarisation would take place in the West Riding when in 1947 Alderman Wilson (Conservative, from Tadcaster) quoted Hyman (Labour, Chairman of the Education Committee) as saying that the Authority was going all out for multilateral schools. Clegg had to draft a new statement and he explained to Alderman Johns (Liberal, Vice-Chairman) that he had made it as temperate as possible. The Education Officer did not want this issue to become political, and in his efforts to avoid this he was prepared to emphasise different aspects of the scheme to different people. "At this juncture Clegg achieved his aim, for the memorandum, embodying Clegg's statement, was accepted by the committee with only one dissenting vote (Gosden and Sharp, 1978 op cit).

With regard to the West Riding Development Plan, the Minister raised objections mainly to the lack of technical education and he insisted that more should be provided (subsequently the Authority increased the amount by 14 per cent) and that courses should start at eleven. The Authority proposed 34 multilateral schools, 62 bilateral schools, 15 grammar schools and 47

modern schools. All political parties accepted this though some anxieties were expressed and there were objections to multilateral proposals for Harrogate and Ripon. The most serious problem arose from Keighley (the only excepted district in the West Riding) which had a large number of Labour members but which proposed a tripartite scheme. This stance was justified by the assertion that Keighley was not a good place for experiments because of well-entrenched traditions.

The Ministry was sympathetic to the local cause and when the newly elected (1949) Education Committee discussed the Development Plan, it concluded that, whilst it did not wish to make a wholesale revision of the Plan, all schemes in the Plan were not to be regarded as final. The importance of negotiating processes was ensured when the Committee pledged that local interests would by consulted fully again before any schemes were converted into bricks and mortar and with regard to secondary education stressed the importance of diversity and flexibility. The multilateral schemes for Keighley, Harrogate, Goole, Pontefract and Spen Valley were dropped. Clegg seems to have agreed with the view of letting each area choose its own pattern of organisation on the grounds that it worked well and prevented violent and continual changes in policy as political fortunes varied within the County.

The great need in the West Riding, as in other LEAs, was still that of providing adequate accommodation and staffing for the children in its schools. There was much crisis development because of the increase in the birth rate after the war and also the increase in the number of pupils brought about by the raising of the school leaving age to fifteen in 1947. Thus, though the West Riding showed early, serious and persistent interest in the notion of multilateral schools it was only able to open one in January 1950 – Calder High at Mytholmroyd – because building had started on a secondary modern school before the war and conversion was easy. Indeed, the most obvious need was to increase the number of grammar school places available in the south of the County. Here, children in the West Riding districts around, but outside Sheffield, and in the mining districts had to obtain higher marks to gain a grammar school place than children in the towns and higher marks than in the north of the West Riding. This problem of fewer selective places in the south of the Riding was a matter of political concern and Alderman Flavell (Hemsworth) raised the issue in the County Council. Clegg was also very concerned to retain the good quality staff who taught in the sixth forms of the grammar schools (Gosden and Sharp, 1978 op cit). The impact of these concerns was to retain and, if possible, to extend the grammar schools.

CONCLUSION

Summary of Themes (1944-1949)

The 1944 Act was a political initiative designed to fashion the national system of education. It evolved out of the pre-war system, wartime discussions within the Board, existing practices and much existing provision. The dominant system, which it produced, the tripartite system, was also an aspect of the same evolutionary process. The development of the tripartite system (substantially bipartite in most localities) was a product of the speed at which development had to take place. The three factors of an increasing school population, increased expectations and the need to repair or rebuild schools after the war combined to produce a situation that required an immediate answer. The mandatory/permissive mix, the level of resourcing, the

need to use existing plant and personnel, the reference to localities and to LEAs (especially with regard to the production of development plans) combined to produce a national system with different sub-systems and a varied and hesitant ideology.

Implementation of the Act

The implementation of the Act was largely in the hands of the Labour Party, which had gained a large majority in the 1945 election. It was also very successful in the local government elections of 1946. The first Minister was Ellen Wilkinson, who was enthusiastic, energetic and ambitious. Universal milk was introduced in 1946, but Wilkinson became disillusioned and committed suicide in February 1947. George Tomlinson took her position.

At this time, education was much more of an issue locally than nationally since at national level the 1944 Act seemed to have settled the issue whilst at local level the need to prepare development plans ensured that discussions would take place. The plans sent to the Minister were remarkably diverse largely because they had to take notice of the exigencies of local circumstances with regard to sites, buildings and staffs. Two County Authorities and three County Boroughs intended to establish only comprehensive schools and nine County Authorities and eleven County Boroughs planned one such school. Over half the County Boroughs were planning to provide secondary education only in separate grammar, technical and modern schools, but only a quarter of Counties had similar intentions (Thompson, 1947 and 1952.) The response to the Act was typical of the decentralised system. The government not only received a variety of responses, but also was happy to agree to a considerable variety of provision throughout the country.

At the outset there seems to have been little division on party lines. The fact that, in general, Labour controlled Authorities were determined to hold onto their grammar schools whereas west Wales (a Liberal stronghold) and Westmoreland (held by the Conservatives) were amongst the first to go comprehensive suggests that the real constraints on local planning were demographic and economic rather than ideological (Richmond, 1978). Early comprehensive schools tended to develop in Authorities covering a large geographical area with a rural economy and a relatively sparse population.

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